

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 05855 141634Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 MCT-01 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04
SIL-01 SS-15 NSC-05 /069 W
-----014958 150639Z /23

R 141143Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0920
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONCUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: RIVAL SIKH SECTS CLASH IN AMRITSAR

1. VIOLENCE BROKE OUT IN AMRITSAR (PUNJAB) ON APRIL 13 WHEN RIVAL SECTS OF SIKHS CLASHED AT A RELIGIOUS MEETING. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, 17 PERSONS WERE KILLED AND APPROXIMATELY 100 INJURED IN THE CLASHES, WHICH WERE FINALLY BROKEN UP WHEN POLICE INTERVENED IN FORCE WITH TEAR GAS. THE TROUBLE BROKE OUT AT A CONFERENCE OF NIRANKARIS, A SIKH SECT COMPRISING THE FOLLOWERS OF BABA GURBACHAN SINGH, A SPIRITUAL "GURU" OF SIKHISM SIMILAR TO THOSE CURRENTLY POPULAR IN HINDUISM. FOLLOWERS OF A RIVAL SECT, THE ORTHODOX AND FANATIC NIHANG SIKHS, WERE MEETING AT ANOTHER LOCATION IN THE CITY AND REPORTEDLY WERE ANGERED AT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NIRANKARIS AND THEIR "GURU", WHOM THEY CONSIDER TO BE A FAKE. SOME 250 NIHANGS ARMED WITH SPEARS AND GUNS MARCHED TO THE NIRANKARI MEETING AND FORCED THEIR WAY IN. DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF POLICE, BOTH SIDES OPENED FIRE AND SEVERAL POLICEMEN WERE INJURED IN THE

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CLASHES.

2. THIS OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE POLITICAL OVERTONES, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SOME REPORTS THAT THE NIHANGS WERE JOINED IN THEIR ATTACK BY SEVERAL AKALIS, MEMBERS OF THE SIKH POLITICAL PARTY WHICH RULES THE PUNJAB IN ALLIANCE WITH THE JANATA. NIHANGS ARE KNOWN TO BE VIOLENCE-

PRONE AND HAVE CREATED DISTURBANCES IN THE PUNJAB BEFORE.
NIHANGS SERVE AS WATCHMEN AT SIKH GURUDWARAS (TEMPLES) AND
USUALLY BEAR WEAPONS.

3. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE OTHER VIOLENT CLASHES HAVE OCCURED
IN NORTH INDIA. ACCORDING TO TODAY'S "TIMES OF INDIA", SIX-
TEEN PERSONS WERE KILLED AND EIGHT INJURED WHEN POLICE FIRED
ON AGITATING WORKERS OF PANTNAGAR AGRICULTURE UNIVERSITY IN
THE NAINI TAL DISTRICT OF U.P. ON APRIL 13. THE UNIVERSITY
WORKERS HAVE BEEN ON STRIKE FOR SEVERAL DAYS TO DEMAND BETTER
SERVICE CONDITIONS. THE U.P. GOVERNMENT HOME SECRETARY TOLD
THE PRESS IN LUCKNOW THAT THE POLICE FIRED ON THE WORKERS
AFTER THEY HAD DEFIED ORDERS BANNING DEMONSTRATIONS.
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

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